

Child poverty in the OECD: Trends, determinants and policies to tackle it ^[1]

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the main trends in child income poverty since the mid- 2000s, and explores to what extent child poverty trends are linked to demographic, policy and/or labour market changes. Trends in poverty and the standard of living of children in low-income families since the onset of the Great Recession are also closely examined: nearly 1 in 7 children is income-poor in the OECD, and child poverty increased in almost two-thirds of OECD countries with the Great Recession. About 1 in 10 children across the OECD live in a family with a standard of living below the 2005 poverty line. Children in low-income families experienced a decline in their standard of living in many countries, with the largest decline among families with the smallest incomes.

The paper also discusses the contribution of financial assistance paid to households under different schemes; it examines how child poverty would evolve if the employment rate of parents from poor families were increased or if the payment of family or housing allowances was more directly targeted at poor families. These analyses help to discuss the policy levers by which child poverty can be substantially reduced. A substantial reduction in family poverty (from 11% to less than 6% on average) would be obtained if all parents from poor families were to be in paid employment. Moreover, a budget-neutral redistribution of family and housing benefits to poor families can help reduce child poverty in many countries. But, such a reallocation of benefits does not lift children from very low-income families out of poverty. These children often experience multiple aspects of material deprivation (including poor housing conditions and a lack of educational opportunities), which calls for a comprehensive strategy combating poverty in all its dimensions.

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